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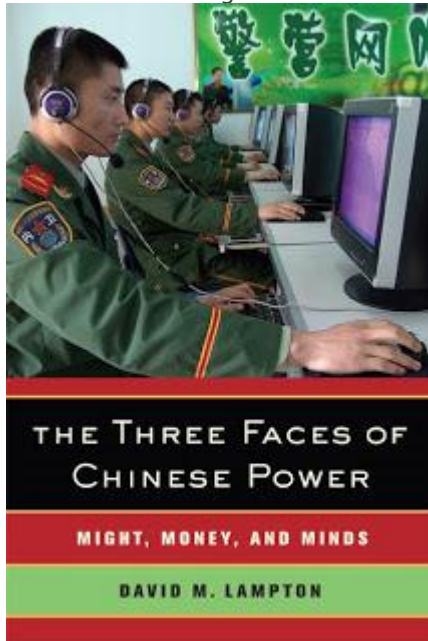
In Case You Missed It: Three Faces of Chinese Power

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A Review of David Lampton's Newest Book

By Eric Setzekorn

David Lampton, a distinguished professor of international relations at SAIS, knows this is a great time to publish a book on Chinese power. As a new administration, which he may play a role in, attempts to craft a balanced and articulate China policy, his newest effort, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power; Might, Money and Minds*, will be influential and widely read. The book is a comprehensive and largely successful attempt to grasp the motivation, intent and challenges for Chinese international relations as China becomes a global leader and East Asia the center of world economic, political and military



power. The result is a cogent review of a broad range of issues and policies which, while impressive in its scope and clarity, is unbalanced in its source selection and focus.

The vital theme that Lampton weaves into his account is the tremendous rise in the quality of Chinese leadership and growing economic, military, political tools at China's disposal, all dedicated to one objective: stability. Lampton repeatedly cautions readers that for at least the next ten to fifteen years China will be occupied dealing with its tremendous internal problems and domestic needs and should not be seen as a destabilizing threat. He is cautious to note that although China's current policy to become more integrated into the global system should be construed as a positive trajectory it will still require massive changes by the world and particularly the United States.

Lampton defines power as "the ability to define and achieve objectives" which can be achieved by: "might" coercive power implemented through military action, economic embargoes and isolation; "money," which can obtain coercive power and confer normative power; and "minds," ideational or soft power. Each of these facets is intertwined and mutually supporting with advances or retreats in each area conferring more or less power to the others. An important aspect of Lampton's definition of power, and a running jab at recent American policy, is a concern with power "efficiency." Lampton writes that "the efficient use of power requires the optimum mix of power types to achieve objectives with the least expenditure of resources" (255). A correct and wise balance of the three facets of Chinese power is a large part of what has enabled China to advance its relative position in every sphere of influence so rapidly.

Might and coercive power is the subject of the first section, but is given very brief treatment, with an emphasis on non-military coercion. While the rapid and extensive modernization of Chinese military forces, particularly China's naval and air force, is well covered, Lampton broadens the context to include economic and diplomatic coercion. His access to high level decision-makers and sensitive programs such as China's space efforts helps flesh out some unseen drivers and components of future Chinese military plans, but there is little new information or conclusions. The entire section is largely an effort by Lampton to alleviate fears of China's rising military power and castigates foreigners for the predilection to focus on Chinese might.

Money and Lampton's depiction of the economic rise and power of China are focused more on the rising financial leverage of China than a re-telling of the usual celebratory statistics that are trumpeted in countless books and journals. A crucial power node of Chinese money is "the power of the buyer" arising from China's huge trade imbalances and illustrated through government directed purchasing, such as the continual contest between Boeing and Airbus. The power of the buyer gives the Chinese government tremendous leverage to creating constituent pressures from within other nations in high-tech fields such as nuclear power which are desperate for access to Chinese markets.

Minds and the following chapter "China and its Neighbors" is the real heart of the book and distinguishes it from other China books, especially China books in the United States which generally examine only the bi-lateral relationship. This "ideational power" encompasses "the intellectual, cultural, spiritual, leadership and legitimacy resources that enhance a nation's capacity to efficiently define and achieve national objectives" (118). In these two chapters, Lampton explores the greatly under discussed way that China has successfully built subtle ideational power and deftly tracks its progress around the East Asia region. That China's government serves as an authoritarian model for developing countries is a fact most foreigners are generally aware of but almost no attention is paid to other forms of China's increasingly refined use of soft power. Lampton shows this to be a mistake. Lampton mentions the \$1.35 million dollar grant from the Chinese government to finance 50 percent of the cost of producing material for the Chinese Language Advanced Placement (AP) Test. This exercise of what on the surface appears to be soft power is rather a shrewd combination of might, money and minds operating together to mutually advance Chinese power objectives. The small grant gives the Chinese government tremendous financial leverage in the production and approval of study materials to shape American students' initial impressions of China and further isolate Taiwan's traditional character system.

As a well respected Washington insider, Lampton has tremendous access to global political, military and business leadership. His depth of personal contact with senior leadership is a central strength of Lampton's work, but means the story of Chinese power has a technocratic and antiseptic feel. It should perhaps be noted that some of Lampton's access is perhaps due to his position as a paid consultant to the law firm of Akin Gump which advises Chinese state-owned corporations, big oil companies and Chinese state-owned big oil companies. He notes in chapter one that "The power wielder is like a conductor" which may be a useful analogy in discussing geo-political decision making but is a condescending and bloodless way to view the authoritarian governance of 1.3 billion people. Lampton's language is more skewed when he takes the rare moment to mentions Chinese relationships with countries that have "deficient practices regarding human rights." He ignores thorny questions such as Darfur altogether; Darfur has no citations in the index versus Gross Domestic Product's twenty four. When discussing Chinese priorities he mentions the need to create "more *predictable* legal and judicial systems" rather than transparent or just ones.

David Lampton is one of the most highly visible China scholars today and was an advisor in some capacity to President-elect Obama during the campaign, although his lobbyist ties and previous affiliation with the American Enterprise Institute and the Nixon Center might keep him out of a policy position. He was also one-half of a testy public debate with James Mann, which Mann won in large part because Lampton never really engaged (some would say "understood") Mann's primary argument. *Three Faces of Chinese Power* is an outstanding book and will rightly be highly influential, but should be paired with a more grounded and morally centered analysis of Chinese power, the likes of which we currently lack.

Tags: David Lampton, Three Faces of Chinese Power

